

STATE AGENCY WEB SITES

House Bill 5538 as introduced First Analysis (4-22-98)

Sponsor: Rep. Lingg Brewer
Committee: Advanced Technology and
Computer Development

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Many state agencies, offices, bureaus, and so on currently have web sites on the Internet. People from around Michigan, as well as the world, can access information on the sites 24 hours a day. Indeed, more and more people are choosing to use the Internet to obtain information. In light of the increasing trend for people to choose the Internet as a tool for communication, some feel that certain information should be required to be on the state Internet sites.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would create the Citizen's Information Act to require state agencies that have web sites on the Internet to include certain information, including a complaint and comment form, on the web site. A "state agency" would be defined as a department, board, commission, office, agency, authority, or other unit of state government, and would include colleges and universities. Beginning July 1, 1998 or six months after the effective date of the bill, whichever was later, each state agency Internet web site would have to include at least the following:

* A complaint and comment form. (A "complaint and comment form" would be defined as a form that an individual could use to specify a complaint or comment that related to a state agency. The form would have to be written in a clear and coherent manner and use words and phrases that had common meanings.)

* Instructions on how to electronically obtain the form, along with instructions on how to download, complete, and electronically mail the form to the agency.

* Notices of employment opportunities with that agency, or a referral to the Department of Civil Service Internet site along with a statement that employment opportunities may be listed at that site.

* A newsletter or other document that describes the agency's purpose and services provided.

* A list of names, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses of persons within the agency that could provide the public with specific information that relates to services provided by the agency. (The determination of who to include in such a list could be made by the agency.)

* A list of frequently asked questions of the agency, along with a written response to each question.

* Instructions on the most efficient means to request and obtain information from the agency.

Beginning on the date that a state agency makes a complaint and comment form available on its web site, the agency would also have to: 1) provide a copy of the form to the Department of Consumer and Industry Services; 2) advise people seeking to make a complaint by telephone that the agency's complaint and comment form, and if applicable, a complaint form regarding persons licensed by the state and regulated by that agency, was available on the agency's web site; and 3) advise people seeking to make a complaint by telephone that many public libraries provide Internet access. Information required to be on the web sites would have to be updated at least four times each year.

Further, to the extent that it was economically feasible, a state agency would have to include its Internet web site address in telephone directories that contained the agency's telephone number. Also, the Department of Consumer and Industry Services would have to compile the blank complaint and comment forms it received from the various agencies and make copies of those forms available to public libraries.
